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OTES ON THE VAUX SWIFT (Chactura vauxi) AT SEATTLE, WN.

By S. F. Rathbun.

Standing on the grounds of the University of Washington at Seattle in a somewhat exposed situation is a small building that was formerly used as a heating plant. The brick chimney in connection has a height of about one hundred and twenty feet, and has been in disuse for a number of years. For some seasons past as the time neared for the autumnal migration, it has been the habit of Vaux Swifts to use this chimney as a resort for the night, this beginning to take place about the middle of August. Although on various occasions we had noted the swifts entering the chimney, it was not until the past season that we made observations of the detail of this habit on the part of the birds; and rather than attempt to summarize the matter, we give the result obtained as it transpired during the time when the notes were taken, this period covering each day with but two exceptions from August 26th until September 14th, on which date the last of the swifts were seen.

August 26, 1921.

The day has been pleasant and the evening is almost cloudless. On reaching the vicinity of the chimney soon after six o'clock, there were to be seen circling about at a height of between three and four hundred feet nearly forty Vaux Swifts, which though generally associated, at times became widely scattered. They flew about erratically keeping up a constant twittering, and occasionally would disappear in the distance soon to reappear at a height so great as to be scarcely discernible, then descending somewhat would unite and after circling, again be lost to the view. There was a constant repetition of these actions, but as the day waned the birds restricted their movements to the vicinity of the chimney, and shortly before sunset a single swift dropped into its mouth soon being followed by three others, then suddenly without warning - numbers entered in a manner that resembled many leaves fluttering downward, all quickly disappearing within its mouth. And it was noticeable that during all this time the notes of the swifts were continually to be heard.

At one time as the birds were circling, a few robins chanced to fly just beneath them and immediately two of the swifts gave pursuit to one of the robins, forcing it to twist and turn and increase its speed; but the chase was of short duration, the swifts soon rejoining their kind.

August 28.

Another pleasant evening and on our arrival in the vicinity of the chimney an hour before sunset there could be seen a few Vaux Swifts flying about, their numbers increasing as the time of the setting of the sun drew near. Shortly before this took place a single swift entered the chimney quickly followed by five others; and just as the sun disappeared from view, the remainder of the birds with a single exception also entered within the space of a few minutes. This individual continued to fly around for some time then suddenly dropped into the chimney's mouth.

Tonight this action on the part of the birds was noted; as the time approaches when it is their intention to enter the chimney, repeated dives at its mouth will be made as it is passed in flight and the more frequently this occurs, the nearer the time when the swifts will enter.

August 30.

Calm and pleasant. For nearly an hour preceding sunset numbers of the swifts about the locality of the chimney in the manner already described. Half an hour before the sun disappeared a single swift after circling

SOME NOTES ON THE VAUX SWIFT. (cont.)

a number of times about the chimney top, dove almost straight from a height of two hundred feet and when just over it dropped lightly therein, in this act bringing the tips of its wings high above the body. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour a few more also entered, to be followed shortly by the remainder of the birds within the space of less than a minute, the effect being that of a wavering stream flowing into the chimney's mouth. On one occasion this evening as the swifts were circling, an airplane passed quite near the vicinity. At this the birds immediately rose to a great height leaving the locality, but shortly after returned.

August 31.

It has rained during the day and the evening is overcast and blustery. We were in the vicinity of the chimney earlier than usual and the swifts were to be seen flying about its top, at times as they circled being scattered in all directions by the gusts of wind. As the evening was dull the birds began to enter earlier than usual, when doing so being forced to take advantage of lulls in the wind, even then but few being successful; and the body of the swifts were still circling when a dark Pigeon Hawk (suckleyi) suddenly appeared and making a dash scattered them. The hawk singling an individual gave chase but being evaded returned and perched on a tree quite near the chimney, here remaining motionless for some time before flying away. Within a few minutes after it had left, the swifts numbering about forty returned in a compact body against the wind and when above the chimney without the slightest hesitation dropped therein, as it were, almost as a unit. The effect of this entrance of the birds was striking, there was no hesitation on the part of any and not a straggler was left to fly about as has been invariably the case in our previous observations. All the swifts seemed to be governed by a single impulse- to enter the chimney as quickly as possible.

September 1.

About an hour previous to sunset the swifts began to be seen circling near the chimney their numbers increasing as the day waned, this increase being very noticeable as the new arrivals were high in the air keeping up a constant twittering.

This evening after the usual preliminary flying about the chimney individuals entered from time to time, and shortly before the sun set the main body did so almost simultaneously, the few remaining birds following very soon after.

The eve was fair, a light wind prevailing.

September 2.

It was an hour before sunset when the first swifts were seen, these being few in number and widely scattered. Within a short time others appeared and all circled about in the vicinity of the chimney, on occasions an individual feinting as if to enter.

When first seen the swifts were quite silent but as the numbers increased their lisping notes were frequent, at times becoming almost incessant. There were new arrivals continually with the result that twenty minutes prior to the setting of the sun, at least fifty swifts were rapidly circling about the chimney top now and then one darting at its mouth. Just before sunset as the body of the birds in passing the chimney came nearly over its top the larger number dropped in quickly, having given no warning of such intent; being followed by the remainder within the ensuing two minutes, this taking place as the sun dropped below the horizon.

SOME NOTES ON THE VAUX SWIFT. (cont.)

September 3-4.

The actions of the swifts on these evenings was but a repetition of what has already been described, but it is noticeable that their numbers show an increase.

September 5.

A fair and calm eve. By half past five numbers of the swifts were circling in the vicinity of the chimney this continuing for some time, when suddenly all left the locality and were not again seen for nearly half an hour, when a few were observed high in the air. A few minutes later the body of the birds now numbering upwards of eighty came in sight and began to fly about the chimney, their actions indicating that they were about to enter, when a passing airplane drove all away. Eight minutes afterwards all returned, a few immediately entering, the remainder circling high in a compact body, when suddenly the birds quickly dropped to the chimney's mouth and within ten seconds all had disappeared within. When so doing they resembled a dangling black rope suspended in the air one end of which hung within the mouth of the chimney.

September 6-11.

Observations have been taken on each day with the exception of two and it is noticeable that during the past few evenings, there has been an increase in the number of swifts using the chimney as a resort.

September 12-

A calm and beautiful evening following a very pleasant day. Upwards of forty swifts were flying about the chimney at six o'clock, some quite high. As daylight waned all the birds descended, being at times just above the chimney's top. Their flight was very erratic sometimes being in the same direction, then broken, after which the birds would reunite and pursue the same course. With the deepening of the twilight a more compact body was formed that whirled about the chimney in the same direction, individuals continually feinting to enter as its mouth was passed. Suddenly two of the birds dropped into the chimney to be followed within the next few minutes by upwards of thirty, and these in turn shortly after by nearly all the remainder. We noticed however, that the number still remaining outside was constantly augmented by arrivals. At this time an airplane passed in the vicinity and the swifts immediately left the locality, being joined by a few from within the chimney; but all soon returned and after circling in a compact body for a short time entered the chimney just at sunset.

More swifts entered the chimney this evening than on any since our observations began, the number exceeding one hundred, and this increase in numbers attributable apparently to the late arrivals might indicate that the latter were migrating birds attracted to the chimney by the others, there to tarry for the night.

September 13-

Another very pleasant day, the evening being calm. At six o'clock there were about twenty swifts circling very high over the chimney, this continuing for a space when all disappeared to return after a short time. We have noticed that on the fair evenings particularly if there is a lack of wind the swifts are quite likely to fly over a larger area, this being quite contrary to their actions on the dark or lowery ones, as on these latter the birds restrict themselves rather closely to the vicinity of the chimney.

Shortly before sunset two swifts disappeared within the chimney, and the remainder with the exception of eight, after describing several wide circles, leisurely followed their example. Those remaining outside repeatedly flew about the chimney at times diving at its top but we failed to see any enter, and all disappeared shortly before darkness ensued.

The total number of swifts seen this eve proved to be forty of which thirty-two entered the chimney.

SOME NOTES ON THE VAUX SWIFT. (cont.)

September 14-

Sunshine all the day and a calm eve. An hour before sunset there were three swifts flying about the locality of the heating plant. These birds soon after began to circle the chimney, now and then making a dive as if to enter, and shortly before the sun set one dropped within its mouth to be followed by the remaining two within three minutes. No other swifts were seen although we remained in the vicinity until darkness fell.

September 15-16-

In view of having seen so few swifts on the evening of the 14th, on both of the two following we arrived earlier than usual in the vicinity of the chimney staying until dark, but none were noted.

Seattle, Wn., May 1, 1922.

BIRDS OF TACOMA AND VICINITY.

By J. Hooper Bowles.

The following list was made out as the simplest possible system of instructing beginners in bird study as to what species of birds occur in the vicinity of Tacoma, Washington, and when to look for them. It was thought best to follow as closely as possible the American Ornithologists' Union check-list of North American Birds of 1910 as regards nomenclature.

The list of birds from the mountain district is almost certainly incomplete, but it is believed that the list is almost complete in other respects. The compilers of the list are Mr. L. W. Brehm, E. A. Kitchin, and J. Hooper Bowles, all of Tacoma, Washington. In connection with Chas. K. Reed's "Western Bird Guide" this list would seem to be a simple and inexpensive means of learning a very large percentage of our birds. Perfection is difficult in most things, and extreme brevity was a necessity in order to get the complete list on a card of convenient size to carry in a coat pocket, but the reception of the list has been highly gratifying to the Tacoma Ornithological Society, of which the list is Bulletin No. I.

The following letters are used with the meanings indicated:

- R. means "Resident all the time."
- F. means "Fall migrant only."
- S. means "Spring migrant only."
- S.& F. means "Spring and Fall migrant."
- S.R. means "Summer resident."
- W. means "Winter resident."
- M. means "Mt. Rainier at snowline."
- * means "Extremely rare."

W.	Western Grebe	W.	Tufted Puffin
W.	Holboell's Grebe	W.	Rhinoceros Auklet
W.	Horned Grebe	*W.	Ancient Murrelet
W.	Eared Grebe	R.	Marbled Murrelet
R.	Pied-billed Grebe	R.	Pigeon Guillemot
R.	Loon	W.	California Murre
W.	Pacific Loon	S.&F.	Parasitic Jaeger
W.	Red-throated Loon	R.	Glaucous-winged Gull